



Nature's Symmetry

In nature, symmetry is a built-in barometer. Symmetry is a check and balance mechanism, in many cases, of physiological health and function. In most cases, symmetrical function correlates to a physiological "all systems normal" status. *Asymmetry* triggers an alarm that something just is not right.

In an Audiologist's eye, audiometric asymmetry signals potential ear-related disease, which may range from the benign (earwax), to the urgent (middle ear infection), to the emergent (cranial tumor, Acoustic Neuroma); the latter may pose a life threatening condition.

The Referral Criteria

OSHA requires that employees requiring medical referral be notified, although the method of notification is not stipulated.

T K Group, Inc. adopts the AAO Otologic Referral Criteria for Occupational Hearing Loss Prevention Programs our staff pf audiologists feel this criteria is most valid. All audiometric data processed by T K Group for use in occupational Hearing Loss Prevention Programs undergoes analysis that when completed produces medical referrals based upon the AAO otologic referral criteria.

T K Group offers an Employee Notification letter, a letter that notifies the employee of current test results. When a medical referral recommendation is indicated, this letter suggests physician consultation.

Once the affected employee receives an Employee Notification Letter stating the need for follow-up, your company's medical referral compliance requirement is satisfied. We however suggest that a signed copy of the notification be maintained with the employee's file for documentation. This is not to say, however, that medical referrals be forgotten. We suggest that a facility representative follow-up with all individuals having received a medical referral to reinforce the need to consult with their personal physician or Ear, Nose, and Throat physician. Many companies are known to practice the policy of covering the cost of an initial physician visit. However, OSHA does not mandate this protocol. Companies are not required to pay for physician follow-up unless a physician diagnoses an occupationally related pathology.

The Medical Referral report contains two classifications of computer generated medical referrals: **Baseline** (first test) referrals and **Annual or Periodic** test referrals. While baseline referrals are due to the presence of a pre-existing hearing loss, annual or periodic referrals result from changes observed from test to test.



Not appearing in the official report is a third type of medical referral (if applicable) called an **Advisory**. Advisories result from customary professional review of data by staff audiologists. *Advisory letters are submitted independently of the presence or absence of an individual's official medical referral or OSHA trend status.* When applicable, advisories accompany hard copy reports. If advisories exist for facilities opting for the CD ROM reporting format, a separate mailed correspondence will communicate the advisory to the facility contact.

Authored by: Robert Williams, Au.D. | Director Audiology | T K Group, Inc.